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CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES

OF

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

A LECTURE,

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LECTURE.

Catholic Principles of Civil Government.

Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I intend to address you on Catholic Principles of Civil Government. The whole civilized world has been, and is in a state of revolution. Our own country has not escaped. What, two years ago, we would have deemed impossible, is now almost the only subject which engages our attention. Rebellion and civil war were words which we fondly hoped would be known amongst us only to express a state of society from which we should ever be free. But we, too, have been put on our trial. It becomes, then, the duty of every one carefully to reflect on the principles that ought to guide his action in the emergencies which have arisen, or may arise. I therefore invite your serious attention to the truths I shall proceed to lay before you. I do not propose to engage in subtile disquisitions, or to enter into long arguments on matters merely of opinion. I intend to confine myself to those principles which are taught by Catholic theologians, and practically inculcated by the Church herself.

We must start from the principle always laid down by the Church, that the power of all civil governments comes from God. St. Paul teaches this great truth in a manner not to be mistaken. He enjoins on the Romans (Rom. xiii: 1, 2,) to be subject to the higher powers, for, he says, "There is no power but from God: and the powers that be, are ordained of God." Therefore, he infers, "he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." Here, then, we have one great principle: that civil power comes from God; that its just enactments bind

in conscience, forasmuch as the transgression thereof is resistance to God, which purchaseth damnation. But, it may be asked, if this be true, how can we maintain the popular assertion, that governments derive their power from the consent of the governed? We are taught, now-a-days, that the people are the source of all power; how, then, can it be said that there is no power but from God? It is not so hard as it might appear, at first sight, to reconcile these two assertions. Catholic theologians commonly teach that the governing power is not communicated directly to the person or persons who wield it, but that God gives it directly to the people, or the whole community, and that they transmit it to the ruler of their choice. For, in every community, it is necessary that there be a power to govern, a principle of unity to bind the different elements together; otherwise, instead of a well-organized state, we would have a disorderly mob. We can not imagine a well-disciplined army without a commander, nor a well-regulated community without a governor. Now, God desires that men should form into civil society, for this conduces to their temporal well-being. Commerce, the arts, education even, and science, could never have reached their present perfection, had men lived separated from one another, each family by itself, with no bond to unite them in a community, where their interests would be the same, and their energies and labors would be employed for their mutual good. And, as he who desires the end, must desire also the means necessary to attain that end, God, desiring that civil society exist, must desire also that there be a principle of unity, without which, exist it can not. This principle of unity is, as I have said, the governing power. God ordinarily leaves the selection of the person or persons who are to exercise this power, to those who are to be governed. For His own chosen people, for a time, He selected the rulers himself. But this was an exceptional case. The form of government, and the persons who are to wield the power, are left to be determined by the consent of the governed. Divine Providence may so shape events as to bring about or permit the elevation of a certain person or dynasty, but God never manifests His holy will in a more direct manner. The people, then, are not the original source of power. It comes originally from God. He,

allowing to the people the selection of their rulers, gives to them the power that is necessary for civil government; they choose the person, or persons, who are to be the depository of this power, and, by this very act, they hand it over to them.

But they can not recall it at pleasure; for everything done from on high, is done for good, not for evil—for improvement, not for destruction. Now, to leave to the governed the power to overthrow a government at will, would be to throw open the door to confusion and anarchy. Than this, nothing could be more contrary to the designs of God in establishing civil society. He meant that this society should bring happiness and prosperity to the human race, and this end it can never attain, unless it be regulated by a fixed, permanent government. Some forms allow, of course, of more changes in regard to persons than others. The monarchical is the least mutable, as the death, or the resignation, or the deposition of the reigning monarch is the only cause for a change. The democratic form is the most subject to changes, for its very essence requires that most of the officers of government retain power only for a time, and then surrender it to those whom the voice of the people may have called to succeed them. But, even in this case, all has to be done according to legally established form. Take the example of the Constitution under which we live. Although not purely democratic, it exemplifies what I wish to say. The president duly elected must be obeyed by all, whether, before election, they were his opponents or friends; during his term of office he can exercise his constitutional powers, no matter how unpopular his administration may be. If he violate the laws, he can be impeached and tried, but only by the proper tribunal, and after certain forms. So, in the legislative branch, an act passed by both Houses of Congress, and approved by the president, if not unconstitutional, forms part of the law of the land, even though, were it to be submitted to the popular vote, a majority of the people might be found against it. The Constitution itself prescribes the manner which is to be followed, in order to change its provisions, and changes introduced in any other manner would be null and void. Thus, you see, that even in the freest form of government, there is no such a thing as the possibility of a legal change of existing laws, or even of removing legally

appointed officers, by the mere manifestation of the popular will. All government, it is very true, rests originally on the consent of the governed; this consent, as it was freely given, could have been freely withheld; but, once given, it can not be withdrawn without most serious cause, and, if withdrawn without such cause, its effects yet remain, and the government founded on it is as legitimate as it was on the day on which it was formed. All this is equally true of other forms of government which, necessarily, allow of less change. To sum up, then, God, approving of civil society, delegates to the original founders thereof the power necessary to organize and to govern it; they choose the form of government, and the persons to whom they intrust the governing power; at that moment commences the distinction between the governing and the governed, a distinction which can not be changed, modified, or abolished, at the mere *fiat* of the popular will. I may add, that it has often been the case, that the civil power has been usurped by some person without the consent of the people. But, if he remain in peaceful possession of power, and the people gradually acquiesce in obedience to his rule, it is manifest that they thus consent to the form of government which has been imposed on them. If this state of things last for a sufficient length of time to give them a fair opportunity of protesting against the usurpation, and they fail to do so, and if the rights of no third party be infringed on, their implied consent supplies the original defect in the title of the usurper; he becomes a legitimate ruler; and his government shares all the prerogatives of legitimate power.

The consideration of these principles now leads us to the most intricate and difficult point of our subject—the mutual rights and duties of the ruler and the governed. To make matters clearer, I will speak of the governing power as a person, because all branches of government form one body, in which is vested the civil authority. The doctrine that a government can not be overthrown without cause, must not be confounded with the theory that kings rule by right Divine, that is, that they, personally, are appointed by God, and that no matter how bad or tyrannical they may be, they can never forfeit their power. This is not Catholic, but is essentially Protestant doctrine. It was first broached by imperial lawyers in the middle ages, during the great contest

between the Pontiffs and the German Emperors, in order to prevent the former from interfering to protect the liberties of the Church, and of the people, against the latter. But it came more into vogue after the great religious secession of the sixteenth century, when the great principles of freedom, which the Church had held out as a beacon light to civilization and humanity, during the dark and tempestuous middle ages, were utterly ignored. James I., of England, wrote a book in defense of this pretended right Divine. He carried his theories into practice. He sent word to his Parliament "that God had appointed him absolute master; and that all privileges which legislative bodies enjoyed, were pure concessions proceeding from the bounty of kings." His doctrine was carried into practice even further by his son Charles, who by it was led to a course of oppression and disregard for the popular will that eventually cost him his life. The same theory was formerly maintained by Puffendorf and other Lutheran writers. King James was met and confuted by two eminent Jesuit theologians, Bellarmine, in Italy, and Suarez, in Spain. It is worthy of remark that Suarez, the Jesuit, writing on civil power, uses language which finds its counterpart in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. And, it is to be remembered, that there is no modern theologian of more weight than this illustrious man, none whose opinions are entitled to more credit. He does nothing more than to develop the great principles laid down in the thirteenth century, by the founder of modern theology, the Angel of the Schools, St. Thomas of Aquin. I will proceed to state those principles, never advancing any proposition not maintained by these great theologians, or, at least, not a legitimate consequence of what they have taught.

The civil ruler receives his power, not to further his own private good, but to protect and promote the interests of the community. Hence his acts must be all directed to this end. He has the law making power; indeed, in this, and in the execution of the laws, his authority chiefly consists. Now, what is a law? St. Thomas defines it to be "an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has the government of the community." In the first place, a law must be according to right reason, and, if it be not, St. Thomas says that it is not a law, but rather a perversion of law. And, following S. Isidore of Seville, he

teaches that to be according to reason, it must be for the public good; in other words, it must be, he says, just, its observance must be possible, it must be according to nature, or to the customs of the country, in accordance with the circumstances of time and place, necessary, or at least useful, not intended for the benefit of private individuals, but for the common good of all citizens. These are the conditions of a good law, laid down by a monk of the thirteenth century. And summing up, he further adds, that a human law, to be according to reason, must be not opposed to the Divine Law, or to the law of nature, or to the well-being of those for whom it is framed. And these conditions he requires, that a law oblige in conscience, so that, enumerating the different forms of government, the monarchical, the democratic, the oligarchical, and others, he concludes by mentioning the tyrannical, which, he says, is entirely corrupt, whence from it we can get no examples of laws. Thus does Catholic theology set bounds to the pretensions of the civil power; it sternly points out to it the qualities which its laws must have to be just, and binding in conscience, and it declares that if they have them not, they are null and void. In this doctrine, the tyrant who acts for his own private interest, and forgets the good of the people, finds his rebuke. The saying of Louis XIV., the grand monarch of France, that he was the State, is confuted; it is declared that the people have a right to be benefited by the laws; that these must be in accordance with their customs and habits. When reading over these teachings of the great theologian, the mind is naturally carried to the Declaration of 1776. Take those laws of England which that document denounces as unjust, examine them by these principles of St. Thomas of Aquin, and you will find that his teaching sustains the doctrines of the patriots of the Revolution. And yet the Church is pointed at with scorn and derision as the upholder of tyranny, the protector of the oppressors of the people! Such is ever the fate of justice and truth. They are persecuted, misrepresented, belied; the world loves falsehood, and there are always men base enough to gratify its desires.

We are naturally led, in this connection, to inquire into a principle which has been asserted, of late years, in a very prominent manner, and which has exercised not a little influence in bringing about the troubles which now afflict our country. This principle

teaches that there is a law higher than the civil law, which overrules this latter, in case of any conflict between them. We have just learned from St. Thomas, that a civil law, to be just, must be in accordance with the positive law of God, and the law of nature, as well as conducive to the welfare of those for whom it is framed. If, therefore, it be not in accordance with the law of God, or the law of nature, it is not binding in conscience. I presume that it is not necessary to say here that, by law of nature, is not meant the physical condition of soil, climate, or race, but that great moral law, written by nature in the heart of every man, and confirmed and enforced by God in the Ten Commandments. This law, and other laws promulgated by God, are, of course, of a higher order than the enactments of the civil power, because they come from a higher authority. The command of the inferior must, necessarily, yield to that of the superior, and king or emperor has no power against the law of God. The principle, then, is undeniably true; it is the principle on which the martyrs went to the stake and the scaffold, the principle which Peter proclaimed when he said to the council, "We ought to obey God rather than man." But it is in the application that lies the danger. A fanatic may be conscientiously convinced that he has a right to remove the evil caused by a public malefactor, by depriving him of life, and, misapplying the principle of the higher law, commit the crime of murder. It is not very difficult to misunderstand passages of Scripture, and to subvert society, acting on such mistaken convictions. How can this danger be avoided? What rule can be laid down, by which this principle of the higher law can be safely applied in practical cases? I know of one alone, but it will be satisfactory only to Catholics. It is this: There is only one power on earth that has the right to decide whether the civil law be in accordance with, or in opposition to, the law of God. That power is the Church of Christ. To her, the Divine Founder has left the decision of all moral questions, promising to afford her unerring assistance in the rendering thereof. She is a living body, constantly speaking, advising, exhorting, rebuking. She has not only the power to point out when and where the civil law is contrary to the law of God, but it is her duty to do so. This duty she has never failed to discharge, and, hence, she has always encountered the mortal hatred of tyrants. As long, there-

fore, as the Church, through her ministers, does not condemn a law, her children can remain tranquil, certain that they are not doing wrong in obeying it. For example, she has condemned, as unjust and unlawful, the African slave trade. In it, therefore, no Catholic can conscientiously take part. As yet, she has pronounced no judgment of Negro Slavery; and Catholics can hold, on that vexed subject, whatever opinion they think most in accordance with right reason. Nor do we thus claim for the Church the right to interfere in politics; but we merely restrict to a divinely-appointed, infallible tribunal a right, the usurpation and reckless exercise of which, by irresponsible, self-constituted teachers, have been productive of incalculable evil, have, in fact, contributed to bring the most prosperous and happy country in the world to the verge of utter ruin. Here is the secret why Catholics are conservative; why, whatever may be our private opinions on the questions of the day, we do not fall into the exaggerated fanaticism now so rampant. The principle of private judgment must produce disruption in civil as well as in religious society. Moral questions must be considered, civil laws must touch on them in one way or another; and, if you leave it to the private judgment of every one to determine the relative bearings of the moral and the civil laws, you render government impossible, unless by brute force. No majority, no reason of state, no political expediency or necessity, are of a moment's account, when weighed against the obligation of the moral law; and, if every one have the right to determine what this moral law is, I see no escape from anarchy but in standing armies and absolute despotism. The fire may appear but a spark; you may smother it, but you can not put it out. Slowly and stealthily it will consume, one by one, all the supports of government and order, until, at last, the whole edifice will fall with a crash, that will astonish and terrify the world. Wherever so-called Catholic governments have endeavored to muzzle the Church, because she opposed their iniquitous laws, they have compassed their own ruin. France, Spain, Austria, Naples, all bear witness to this truth. It is impossible to avoid the danger of conflicts between the civil law and mistaken notions of moral obligation, unless men listen to the authoritative, infallible voice of the only true Church of Christ.

We have seen the duty of the ruler toward the people. He is

to wield his power for their good. Men entered into civil society yielding some of their natural rights, that, in union, they might find security, strength, prosperity, happiness. To the attainment of these ends all laws must be directed; this is the imperative duty of the governing power. But what are the duties of the governed? To obey the just laws and enactments of the civil authority. This is the great lesson which catholicity never ceases to inculcate. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," cries St. Paul. He teaches us that the civil ruler is God's minister to us, and he commands us to obey him for conscience' sake. All just laws must be obeyed; no private interest, no surging of popular discontent, no specious theories can absolve the Christian from this obligation. While the Church tells the civil ruler that, in exercising his power, he must look only to the public good, she teaches the people that they must obey the laws, and that, if they prove refractory, the civil authority can use the sword, which has been placed in its hands to punish offenders, to maintain the inviolable majesty of the law. The freer the government, the less physical force is placed at its disposal, the more necessary is it for the public good, that this principle be inculcated, and deeply impressed on the minds of all. For, if it be forgotten or denied, order must, necessarily, give way to confusion, government to anarchy. The Church, in the performance of her sublime mission, has always proclaimed this principle. She has calmed the passions of infuriated men, who rose up in lawless rebellion against their rulers; she has silenced the low mutterings of ill-suppressed discontent, in those who imagined themselves oppressed and down-trodden; her voice condemns those secret conventicles, where, under the cover of darkness, are hatched plots for the subversion of authority; in a word, she is always to be found on the side of law and order, bringing all her influence to their support, when they are threatened. For this she is denounced as the friend of tyrants, the enemy of liberty. But, in truth, she is liberty's best friend. For nothing is more essential to liberty than order, and the observance of the laws. Liberty does not involve leave for every one to do as he pleases; on the contrary it requires every one to obey all legal enactments. We understand these truths very well, when they come home to ourselves. We may applaud revolutions in Europe, and appeal to them as

glorious examples of the progress of the age, that proclaims, everywhere, the sovereignty of the people. But when, on the same principle, attempts are made to break up this government, we soon hear that the laws can not be violated with impunity, that rebellion must be put down, that no concession should be to armed traitors. These are true sentiments of loyalty, which alone can save a nation. But why should that be wrong in Europe, which is right in America? Why should a general, who puts down rebellion in Italy, be called a butcher, and he who suppresses it in America, be a patriot and a hero? Why was it wrong and cruel in the Pope to gather together an army of volunteers to keep down his mutinous subjects, if it be noble and patriotic, as it undoubtedly is, to volunteer to suppress an uprising which is supported by the greater portion of the Southern people? Were we to apply to our own country the principles so commonly used in judging on European revolutions, we should have allowed the rebellion to destroy that Union in which are the strength and power of the nation. The very papers that are loudest in favor of the most extreme measures against our rebels, are most clamorous in defense of insurrection in Italy. Sometimes, on the same page, mayhap in the same column, you will find an article advocating the confiscation of all the property, and the hanging of all the traitors at the South, and another lauding Garibaldi to the skies. Nay, more, there was danger that the cause of the Union would be disgraced by the support of the arch rebel of Italy. So inconsistent is human nature, when, abandoning principles, it follows impulse or interest. The doctrines of the Church are clear and well-defined. All just laws of legitimate governments must be obeyed; revolution, without cause, is rebellion. This is true conservatism, the only system that can uphold order, or promote the public good anywhere, most of all, in a free country.

It remains for us to consider the case when the civil authority comes into collision with the people. This may happen either because subjects refuse to obey just laws, or because the government acts unjustly, tyrannically, in a manner and to an extent not to be borne with. I have already hinted what the civil ruler has a right to do in the first case. It is his duty to see that the laws are executed, and the sword—emblem of the punishing power,

has been placed in his hands for this purpose. He can use force to put down resistance, but never unless in the cases, and after the manner prescribed by law, or pointed out by necessity. In some forms of government, more latitude is left to the ruler, than in others; but it is an obvious principle, that force should never be resorted to, unless in the last extremity. Here we always find the Church counseling moderation; abhorring herself the shedding of blood, she endeavors to prevent it as far as she can. She thus tamed the fierce dispositions of the men of the middle ages, and taught them that, whenever they can be successfully used, moral suasion and conciliation are preferable to physical force. But there are occasions, alas! where these are of no avail. Thus we have seen the Sovereign Pontiff obliged to use force to put down rebellion; indeed, this manner of keeping the peace is the only one that can be now adopted with effect, in many countries of Europe. At the present moment, we are similarly situated; all peaceful means having been exhausted, the strong arm of the nation has been put forth to crush rebellion. May God grant that victory may continue to perch on the nation's banner, and that a speedy and lasting peace may bring renewed and increased prosperity to our reunited country!

But the case that presents most difficulty is where the arbitrary and tyrannical course of the civil power becomes so intolerable that its acts, to use the expression of St. Thomas, are no longer laws, but the perversion of law. The American Declaration of Independence lays down the principle that established governments are not to be overthrown for light or transient causes, but that they can be resisted if they become subversive of the ends for which they were established, which are the lives, the liberty, and the happiness of the people. This is the correct doctrine, and it is, moreover, expressed in very similar terms by St. Thomas. He says, that unless the oppression be too great, it is better to bear with it than to run the risk of the many evils of civil war, which may be worse than those that arose from the oppression itself. It is not lawful to proclaim a revolution for any light grievance; one or two bad laws will not justify the rushing into the danger of civil war. And, he remarks, that designing persons, under pretext of defending liberty, and expelling tyrants, get possession of power themselves, and become far more

oppressive and tyrannical than the former rulers. He brings, as an example of this, an anecdote related by ancient historians of Dionysius of Syracuse, a tyrant whose name has been handed down to the execration of posterity. Whilst the citizens generally were praying for the death of the tyrant, an old woman made it a point to pray publicly that his life might be prolonged. Dionysius asked her what motive impelled her to pray for him. She answered, "When I was a young girl, we had a very tyrannical sovereign, and we all desired his speedy death. He was killed, and his successor turned out to be worse than he had been; I desired, all the more, the death of this second tyrant, and was glad when it took place; but in his stead we got you, who are worse than either of the other two; so I think it better to bear with you than to incur the terrible calamity of having a fourth worse than you." It is the old fable of King Log and King Stork, and the moral is, that it is frequently better to bear with evils, than to seek violent measures of redress. St. Thomas, therefore, recommends Christian resignation under oppression, and condemns the assassination of unjust rulers, and any private, unauthorized uprising against the constituted authorities. He says, that whatever is done against a tyrant should be done by public authority; for, if the people had the right to appoint a ruler, they have a right also to deprive him of power, or to limit him in its exercise, if he make bad use of it. Nor is this breaking faith with the ruler; for he, by not acting faithfully in the use of his power, has deserved that the contract made with him by his subjects be no longer observed. But, he says, if there be no way of removing the tyrant, the people must fain recur to God, who is our helper in tribulations, and who holds in his hands the hearts of kings. He sometimes punishes the sins of people by allowing them to be ground down by a despotism against which they are powerless. Whilst then St. Thomas recommends Christian patience and forbearance, as well as human caution and prudence, he clearly teaches, that if all other means fail, the people have the right to take back either part or the whole of the power which they confided to the civil ruler, in case that it has been used tyrannically for their destruction. But he insists that this be done by the whole people, not by any one person, clique, or party, in their name. And here we may remark, how truly this

condition was observed in the American Revolution. It was directed, from the beginning, by a Congress of representatives of the people, seconded and aided by the local provincial assemblies. The Congress appointed all civil and military officers, directed all operations of peace and war. Thus lawlessness was checked, order was preserved, the real will of the people was known and obeyed. Private ambition was made subservient to the public weal, the real interests of the country were furthered, and the world beheld a revolution conducted on principles of law and order. How different was this spectacle from the scenes of lawless violence, rapine, and murder, that have marked almost all the revolutions of the Old World, even that of England! Thus, by practical illustration, we can appreciate the high wisdom that dictated to the great Mediæval theologian the idea, that the only legitimate revolution is one which rises against unbearable tyranny, is approved of by the whole people, and conducted by public authority.

Suarez develops the same idea, following, as he always does, the lead of his great Master. But he dwells upon one point which I will present to you, leaving its obvious application to your own consideration. He defines sedition to be a war between two sections of the same commonwealth or state, or between the ruler and his subjects. He says war between two parts, or sections of the same state, the supreme authority being either destroyed or unable to interfere, is always unjust on the part of the aggressor, just on the part of the section that acts on the defensive. He assigns as the reason of this decision that there is no authority in one portion of a state which would enable it legitimately to wage war on another. In other words, the war making power is an attribute of sovereignty. But, he adds, the Supreme Governor can sometimes, if there be an urgent public necessity, confer on one section the power of making war on the other, but then it will not be a war between sections, but between the government and a refractory portion of the commonwealth. But what, he subjoins, if this refractory portion be really aggrieved, and can not obtain redress of its wrongs from the government? He answers, that it can not legally do more than private persons could. That is, if these wrongs amount to tyranny, revolution is lawful; otherwise, it is not. So far Suarez,

whom I have translated almost literally. He then goes on to consider the case of a whole people against the government, and solves it in the same manner as St. Thomas. Thus, you see, how Catholic theologians admit, and, at the same time, restrict the right of revolution. I am not now speaking of a change of government in a peaceful and legal manner. Revolution involves an appeal to the last right that a people can exercise, that of resorting to arms to take back the power which they once confided to their rulers for their mutual good, for the benefit of all the members of society. It is allowable, when all legal means of redress have been exhausted, when oppression has reached such a point that the ends of civil government are no longer attained; and, even then, it must have the consent of the people, and be directed by public authority framed by them.

We have thus traced the origin of civil government, its duties and its rights. The power which wields, comes from God, who ever trusts it to the hands of the people, when they are on the point of forcing themselves into civil society. They hand over this power to rulers chosen by themselves, or placed over them by accident or design. Having once delegated this power, they can not revoke it without serious cause. It is given to their rulers for the common good, and for this alone it can be used by them. Any other exercise of it is an abuse, a perversion. Laws framed in a spirit of justice, must be obeyed; and force can be lawfully employed by a government to insist on their execution. At the same time, when a government has become tyrannical, when it employs the power intrusted to it, not to protect, but to oppress the people, not to further the public good, but to subserve private interest—when, in a word, it becomes dangerous to the lives, or subversive of the liberties or happiness of its subjects, then, all peaceful redress through the ordinary legal means being impossible, rebellion against it is lawful, provided it be in the name of the whole people, a large majority of whom approve of the measures taken against those in authority. These are Catholic principles of civil government, as laid down by our greatest theologians.

It is true that reality falls far below the perfection of the ideal which they present. Human passions have always interfered, and always will interfere, to produce disorder, tyranny on the part of

rulers, or lawlessness on the part of the people. It may be said that Catholic countries are no better governed than Protestant or infidel nations. This may be, perhaps, in some respects is, true. But when has the world listened with docility to the voice of reason and truth? God himself once chose a people, which He separated from all the nations of the earth. He appointed governors, enacted a code of laws for its guidance, and directed its every movement. Yet the history of that people is a continuous record of its rebellion against God. Hence he subjected it to temporal calamities, allowed its enemies to overrun its territory, and finally scattered it over the face of the earth. Yet, who is there so blasphemous as to say that the evils which befel the Jewish nation were the result of an unwise direction of Providence? So it is with the Church. Never treating of worldly things, unless when they enter the sphere of spiritual duties, she tells the nations and their rulers their mutual rights and duties. If they, blinded by passion, hearken not to her voice, the fault is assuredly not hers. Wisdom may go forth in the public way, and find none willing to listen to her voice. The folly is on the part of the unwilling, not on hers. So truth, justice, and morality are on the side of the Church; despotism, lawlessness, and disorder, if they exist, are not to be laid at her door. So-called Catholic governments have persecuted her; she never ceased, precisely, to teach the principles which I have developed. There is one suggestive fact, which is sufficient to show the real state of the question. Oppressive governments are opposed to the free exercise of ecclesiastical power; lawless revolutions invariably persecute the Church. The reason is, because both extremes find their condemnation in the Catholic principles of government, in the beautiful ideal of a civil state, presented by the teaching of the Church. Do not, therefore, judge these principles by the evil effects of human passion, produced against their tendency and influence. Judge them rather in themselves. Opposed equally to tyranny and to lawlessness, to despotism and unjustifiable revolution, on them alone can any well organized society rest with security. They protect liberty, and, at the same time, vindicate the majesty of the law; they prevent anarchy, while they repel oppression; in a word, they present the ideal of a civil society, wherein the govern-

ing and the governed live in mutual peace and harmony, each respecting the rights of the other, working for the common welfare, knowing no interests but the good of country, no enemy but the country's foe, a society founded on justice and right, living in peaceful obedience to law, guided and protected by God.

I have said nothing about the comparative merits of the different forms of civil government, because this is a practical question, to be decided not upon abstract principles alone, but upon various considerations of race, nation, time, power, and other similar circumstances. A large nation may need a very different government from a small state; an impetuous and fiery people require a stronger curb than a cooler and more reflective race. What may be safely left to the better judgment of educated and enlightened citizens, can not be submitted to the ignorant, prejudiced caprice of semi-civilized barbarians. St. Thomas says that the best government is not one of the so-called simple forms, that is, the purely monarchical, the purely aristocratic, or the purely democratic, but one resulting from a mixture of these forms, in which the laws would be made by the elders together with the people. Thus it is clear that he does not look on absolute monarchy as the best of governments. All our most able writers have recommended a mild and temperate government. Since 1789, it is true, that the lawless excesses of the revolution have made some good Catholics look on royalty as the palladium of order and religion; but they have learned, to their cost, how grievously they were mistaken. In every form of government we can find shortcomings to censure, faults to point out, for no human institution is free from defect. Yet, the best form is undoubtedly that which, while providing for wise legislation, and the efficient execution of the laws, leaves the widest field to individual liberty. For these reasons I consider the form of government provided for by the Constitution of the United States to be one of those most in harmony with Catholic principles, one of the best the world has ever seen. It has, undoubtedly, its weak points; it relies not principally on force, but on the patriotic virtue of its citizens; and were this virtue to fail, it would totter. But it guarantees the fullest liberty to all. While ever allowing a full expression of the

popular will, it has adopted a system of checks, which provide against the evils of unbridled democracy. The government is not left entirely in the hands of the people; the Senate, the Judiciary, are not selected immediately by them. Thus order and statesmanship can have full scope, while the liberty and the rights of the individual are respected.

Under any circumstances, it would be proper, in concluding a lecture of this kind, to inculcate the great lesson of Catholic morality, fidelity to the laws, and to the Constitution under which we live. But if, while we enjoyed peace, these words might have appeared but a repetition of patriotic sentiments suited for the conclusion of a discourse, at this moment they have a far more important significance. The Constitution and the Union have been attacked, and with them have been attacked liberty, peace, and prosperity. History records insane actions of popular phrensy; the foolish jealousy of the Athenians, which made them banish their most eminent citizens, lest they should destroy the democratic form of government; the insane fury of the Roman *Plebs*, that kept the Republic in perpetual strife; the madness of the English Commonwealth and the French Democracy, that led to the re-establishment of the governments that had been stricken down; but a more causeless uprising, a more insane attempt than which we now are battling against, disgraces not the annals of popular governments. It is useless to speculate on the causes which have led to this revolt. This is no time nicely to decide the many questions that may arise, whether the blame is to be laid at the door of this one or that one, whether had this or that policy been adopted, peace would have been preserved. We have now to meet the fact, that peace has not been preserved, that it has been broken by the aggression of an unjustifiable, an unnatural rebellion. To this rebellion every good citizen must be opposed. According to the principles which I have developed this evening, as long as the government of the United States exists, to it you owe your allegiance. Nay, more, whatever you believe to be necessary to sustain it, that, if it comport with your condition in life, and with your other duties, you are obliged in conscience to contribute to do. Once great and good men pledged before the whole world their lives, their

fortunes, and their sacred honor in defense of the Declaration that made this a free nation, and nobly did they redeem their pledge. May the God of peace and order grant that, in the present terrible crisis, the same spirit may animate those who enjoy the precious boon bequeathed by the Fathers of the Republic, that the conclusive victory of the legitimate government may swiftly put an end to the present strife, and that once more united under our wise Constitution, we may long continue to be a free and happy people.

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES

OF

Civil Government.

A LECTURE.

BY

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